

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application.

LISTING OF CLAIMS:

Claim 1. (Currently Amended) A method for inhibiting the degradation of mammalian natriuretic peptides in a specimen, consisting of comprising:

placing the specimen into a container in the absence of any degradation-inhibiting agents, wherein the face coming into contact with the specimen is made of or coated with a material selected from the group consisting of silicone and plastics,

wherein said material inhibits the activation of a substance, which once activated, degrades the mammalian natriuretic peptides.

Claim 2. (Canceled).

Claim 3. (Previously Presented) The method as claimed in claim 1 or 2, wherein said specimen is obtained from a human, dog, pig, rat or mouse.

Claim 4. (Previously Presented) The method as claimed in claim 1 or 2, wherein said natriuretic peptide is brain natriuretic peptide (BNP).

Claim 5. (Currently Amended) A method for inhibiting the degradation of mammalian natriuretic peptides in a specimen, consisting of comprising:

placing the specimen into a container in the absence of aprotinin, wherein the face coming into contact with the specimen is made of or coated with a material selected from the group consisting of silicone and plastics,

wherein said material inhibits the activation of a substance, which once activated, degrades the mammalian natriuretic peptides.

Claim 6. (Currently Amended) A method for measuring mammalian natriuretic peptides in a specimen, consisting of comprising the steps of:

placing the specimen into a container in the absence of any degradation-inhibiting agents, wherein the face coming into contact with the specimen is made of or coated with a material selected from the group consisting of silicone and plastics, wherein said

material inhibits the activation of a substance, which once activated, degrades the mammalian natriuretic peptides; and

measuring the mammalian natriuretic peptides by standard means.

Claims 7-11. (Canceled)

REMARKS

In the Advisory Action dated August 26, 2003, the Examiner refuses to enter the Reply after Final filed on June 5, 2003 because the proposed amendments allegedly introduce new issues. Thus, for purposes of Appeal, claims 1-6 remain rejected.

The Request for Continued Examination (RCE) filed under separate cover herewith requests entry of the Reply after Final filed on June 5, 2003. This Preliminary Amendment cancels claims 2 and 9-11 (which were presented in the Reply after Final), and amends claims 1, 5, and 6. Upon entry of the Reply after Final and this Preliminary Amendment, claims 1 and 3-6 will be pending. No new matter is inserted into the application.

Applicants respectfully submit that the pending claims define patentable subject matter such that this application should be placed into condition for allowance. Early and favorable action on the merits of the present application is thereby requested.

If there are any minor matters precluding allowance of the present application which may be resolved by a telephone discussion, the Examiner is respectfully requested to contact Kristi L. Rupert, Ph.D. (Reg. No. 45,702) at (703) 205-8000.

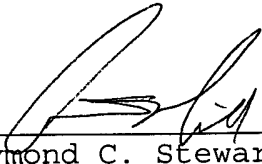
If necessary, the Commissioner is hereby authorized in this, concurrent, and future replies, to charge payment or credit any


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overpayment to Deposit Account No. 02-2448 for any additional fees required under 37 C.F.R. § 1.16 or under 37 C.F.R. § 1.17; particularly, extension of time fees.

Respectfully submitted,

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